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AUTHOR Mullinix, Bonnie B.
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a model of partnership development that emerges from five years of experience grounded in the Southern African context. The model incorporates a continuum of configurations linked to nine critical dimensions: Focus of Interaction; Activities/Projects/Programs; Time and Orientation; Benefit; Trust and Respect; Organizational Structures; Organizational Strategies and Information Access; Locus of Influence; and Written Agreements or Contracts. While this model emerges from practical experience working in "partnership" arrangements with over 120 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in various parts of Africa, the paper reflects on the transdisciplinary aspect of partnership and compares key characteristics of partnership found in various disciplines. In addition, composite partnerships are described based on the analysis of the case experiences that informed the development of the model. Ultimately, the possible application of this model of partnership to international and domestic educational endeavors is addressed. Contains a figure of the emerging model and 16 references. (BT)

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Mullinix, Bonnie B.

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WEAVING A TAPESTRY OF PARTNERSHIP:
Images, Lessons and an Emerging Model from Southern Africa

Dr. Bonnie B. Mullinix
Millicent Fenwick Research Professor in Education and Public Issues
Department of Educational Leadership and Special Education
School of Education, Monmouth University
West Long Branch, NJ

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As Cecilia carries her handiwork to the cooperative, she can hardly remember the time, two years earlier, when she didn't know where her family's next meal was coming from. The personal attention and support given to her by that NGO trainer during a training course she'd taken had made a tremendous difference in her life. She is now an active member of the cooperative, contributing decision making expertise as well as her handiwork in exchange for increased self-esteem and income.

Regina's participation in a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program has added a new dimension to her life. She continues in her job as a domestic worker, but she feels more fulfilled as she uses her newly developed skills to organize and help train others in areas ranging from literacy to HIV/AIDS awareness.

Paulus received training and technical assistance support from a local NGO. As a result, he developed a savings plan and has invested so wisely and saved so much in the past year and a half that he now employs two additional people and has nearly completed building his own shop.

If one ever forgets the impact education can have on an individual life, or that of the broader community, developing countries offer excellent stories and clear reminders of the far reaching and rippling effect that small inputs can have on the quality of a life. While the impact on an individual is often the most poignant image, examining the structures that generate such stories is the point of interest for this paper. Effective and sustainable development efforts do not happen by accident. They result from partnerships that bring grounded and informed local expertise together with external resources, knowledge and experiences.

This paper shares the lessons learned over years of experience working to create effective partnerships for development. It consolidates these lessons in the form of a model represented as a continuum of partnership relationships. Experience working with over 40 organizations and in-depth understanding of the nature of these relationships over time allowed the practitioner researchers to propose a three-phase continuum matrixed across nine dimensions. Following the

relationships from pre-partnership through partnership (emergent) to Partnership (full), clear differentiated indicators were identified for each dimension. These include: focus of interaction; activities/projects/programs; time and orientation; benefit; trust and respect; organizational structures; organizational strategies and information access; locus of influence; and written agreements or contracts.

This framework, grounded in the challenges of the Southern African context from which it emerges, offers an interesting point of reflection for partnership efforts beyond the confines of international development and the region. A review of current explorations of partnership across disciplines reveal elements reflected in this continuum matrix. To provide a broader theoretical background to this discussion of partnership, the paper highlights selected cross-disciplinary definitions and characteristics of effective partnerships. Information is then provided on the case study and experiential research base, methodology and process that informed the development of this model. In exploring the case, the article addresses the role of World Education's READ project in building the capacities of local organizations in Namibia. The article concludes with reflections on the project's responsiveness to the Namibian NGO sector and views on partnership and development. The paper closes by relating the challenges associated with nurturing partnership to the weaving of an intricate tapestry, concluding that, while an admittedly involved process, the product is worthwhile.

Partnership – A Transdisciplinary Concept

In recent years "partnership" has become one of the many catch words currently bantered around in development and educational arenas. Whether it be international development, educational reform and development or grassroots development, the idea that we must work together in a coordinated effort if we are to attain long-term impacts forms a common theme. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of this term "partnership" by grounding it in a practical context and relating it to actual development activities. Before exploring the contextual origins of this emerging model, it is interesting to consider the various views of partnership as explored across a variety of disciplines.

In its broadest use, there seems to be agreement that partnership is an association between two or more persons, groups, or organizations who join together to achieve a common goal that neither one alone can accomplish. Traditionally such associations are characterized by joint membership rights, democratic participation, and shared responsibility. Each member agrees to contribute resources (financial, labor, skill, expertise…) to the partnership with the understanding that the benefits will be shared by all. Committed partners work hard to strengthen each other and endure conflict and change, because they recognize that their shared goal extends beyond the reach of any one member. While each discipline seems explore the details of this concept differently, they have all seem to approach partnership as a viable structural mechanism for increasing the sustainability and impact of development and reform efforts.

From a counseling and family/community support base, Caplan (1976) urged professionals to "appreciate the fortifying potential of the natural person-to-person supports in the population and to find ways of working with them through some form of partnership that fosters and strengthens nonprofessional groups and organizations" (p. 20). His advice invoked a radical paradigm shift for professionals in many disciplines. This change is evident as intervention and development

approaches shift treatment to prevention, from paternalism to empowerment, from deficits to strengths, and from individual to family and community-centered service delivery. The resulting interest in and need for exploring partnership is self-evident.

In the health field, McKnight (1994) encouraged health professionals to discard the ideology of inherent in a traditional medical model; to focus on strength and capacity rather than deficiency and weakness. He urged them to use their skills, contacts, and system resources to enhance (not displace), the problem-solving capacities of communities; to work in partnership to support improved health and health care. In the field of social work, Saleebey's (1992) commentary on the strength perspective in social work practice further provides additional support for the importance of partnering for effectiveness.

Within education, the past decade has witnessed growing numbers of classroom teachers and teacher educators organizing school-university partnerships intended to promote professional development, improve the preparation of teachers, and increase children's learning (Goodlad 1994; Osguthorpe et al., 1995). Although these new learning communities promise to contribute to educational reform, personal growth and professional development (Birrell et al., 1995), few studies have provided clear, conceptual models for initiating and sustaining collaborative change within such partnerships. Indeed, the challenges encountered often remain the focus, and the complications associated with attempting to merge organizations with different cultures and traditions can form seemingly insurmountable barriers (Day, 1998).

There is at least one source of critical reflection on the challenges of school-university partnerships within the United States that begins to outline indicators and inform understanding of effective partnerships. In *Centers of Pedagogy: New Structures for Educational Renewal*, Patterson, Machelli and Pacheco (1999) identify six key elements of effective collaboration (or partnership): mutual trust, honest communication, common goals, flexible governance, positive tensions and a culture of inquiry. In addition, it identifies structural characteristics that support partnership: projects, new roles, realistic expectations and perspectives; significant and equivalent reward structures; and opportunities for sharing and discussion. As will be seen, the majority of these elements are reflected in the model partnership model presented herein.

For a sociological perspective, we turn to Riane Eisler. In her book, The Chalice and the Blade (1990), Eisler makes a clear distinction between two cultural models: the partnership culture, which she symbolizes with a chalice, and the dominator culture, which is symbolized by the blade. In a partnership culture, cooperation is based on trust, diversity is celebrated, and all people and groups are valued. Differences are resolved peacefully and no single individual or group controls another. Women and men are equal partners, and nurturance and caring are honored. In a dominator culture, cooperation is enforced by fear, differences are crushed, and conflicts are resolved through conquest. Select people are considered to be natural superiors and the stereotypical view equating masculinity with aggression is accepted (Eisler & Loye, 1990).

The spirit behind the partnership culture described above is helpful in understanding the approach taken to the work in Namibia. To overcome an historical legacy of dominator cultures, there was no other avenue that made any sense.

Reflections on Partnership.

As our previous exploration has confirmed, the word "partnership" has different meanings to different people. For many, it implies equality of resources -- financial, human, and network. Where it is perceived that equality does not exist, there remains the question as to whether there can be a true **P**artnership. To many, there is a notion of commitment over time. When organizations enter into a **P**artnership, the expectations are that the **P**artnership will exist for a number of years with a commitment of support through difficult times. The challenge of understanding and nurturing the development of partnerships over time is central to the current discussion.

The experience of World Education in Namibia served as a practical and collaborative base to deepen and clarify our understanding of partnership and how to nurture it. As mentioned previously and will be detailed later, World Education had over five years to explore these multiple definitions of "**p**artnership" with their Namibian NGO colleagues. The READ Project had inherent limitations, it was a USAID-funded project, focused on grant distribution and capacity building for NGOs and slated to end in December 1998. It was automatically directed towards certain types of relationships and confined time-bound **p**artnerships. It had to work with organizations who understood and accepted this reality and struggle with the inherent displaced equality that comes from donor relationships. It became necessary to replace the concept of "funding" from the concept of "value" brought to the partnership relationship (Maude, 1998). Over the five year project period, READ worked directly through various stages of "partnership" with over 40 organizations. The concept of a partnership continuum, as described earlier, provided project staff a framework that offered a variety of models for partnering with Namibian NGOs and a way to move beyond initial project constraints. These models allowed READ to partner with NGOs based on their needs at a particular stage and time in their organizational development.

The Partnership Continuum

Experience with **P**artnership in a variety of contexts helps to elaborate the concept of Partnership; to recognize that the partnership process represents a continuum of stages in collaborative relationships. Most organizations that work towards effective and sustainable development realize the advantages and necessity of coordinating efforts and resources in order to attain their goals. Partnerships that strategically maximize the use of resources and expertise from local and international organizations are often the most successful. In the early years of the project READ staff began to realize that they were experiencing a strategic movement along a partnership continuum. Paced according to organizational needs and local realities, this movement was resulting in the development of strong and effective **p**artnerships. On reflection, it became clear that the **p**artnerships (with a small "p") which we were developing represented not only important development interventions but also, on occasion, the first steps towards developing a more broad-based and integrated relationship with selected **P**artners (with a capital "P"). Thus, the optimal relationship in any partnership process is one which encourages NGOs to maintain a relationship with the helping Organization that best suits their needs at a particular stage and time in their

organizational development. Organizations benefit, grow, and progress in a balanced, meaningful, and significant way and depending on organizational goals and aspirations may or may not aspire to a full **P**artnership relationship. The emphasis and value is not on the endpoint, but rather the ability to utilize this model to maximize both benefit to the collaborating organizations and impact on their development goals.

Pre-*p*artnership ⇨	***p*artnership** ⇨	***P*artnership**
Getting to Know Each Other	Working to Achieve Mutually Valued Objectives	Developing and Implementing Programs Together

(see extended model on following page)

Informed by and Informing Practice: From partner to Partner or Beyond

The extended model detailed on the following page was informed by work with NGO's over the five year period of the project. Developed through year four, the model built on the knowledge gained from in-depth association with over 40 different NGOs. Likewise, it came to inform our understanding and facilitation of partnership development.

As the READ Project approached its final year, the position of an NGO along this continuum helped to inform the appropriate strategy and approach for continuing partnership activities. The majority of organizations who benefited from the **p**artnership process often conclude their relationship appropriately at the **p**artner level. These NGOs then receive support to transition to new funders or future financial support strategies.

For other organizations who express an interest in and potential for institutionalizing READ services and offering support to other Namibian NGOs, READ and World Education explore the idea of expanding the relationship towards **P**artnership. In its final efforts to replicate and sustain project impact into the future, READ concentrated a substantial portion of its energy and resources on working with **P**artners: umbrella and networking organizations like the Namibian NonGovernmental Forum (NANGOF) and the Namibia Network of AIDS Service Organizations (NANASO) and other NGOs, such as the Private Sector Foundation and the Rössing Foundation, who are in a position to offer training to other local organizations.

Partnership Development Continuum

Dimensions	pre-partnership ⇨	partnership ⇨	Partnership
Focus of Interaction	Getting to Know Each Other	Working to Achieve Mutually Valued Objectives	Developing and Implementing Programs Together
Activities/ Projects/ Programs	Limited - specifically defined relationships which allow organizations to become acquainted with each other	Opportunistic - organizations work together because it is convenient and appropriate (a good match)	Integral - organizations develop joint programs or activities that grow directly out of common skills and interests.
Time and Orientation	short-term, non-specific	specified/longer-term, objective/activity oriented	open-ended goal/mission oriented
Benefit	Increased Networking – Organizations develop relationships and skills	Increased Capacity - Organizations are able to *do more* and/or access more resources than they could alone.	Increased Status - Organizations are able to *become more* than what they would be alone.
Trust and respect	Building trust and earning respect	Trust and respect exist among a limited number of key staff members	Mutual trust and respect throughout partner organizations
Organizational Structures	Completely autonomous	separate but coordinated	appropriately integrated (e.g. exchange of staff/board)
Organizational Strategies and Information Access	public information shared separate strategies	Proprietary information exchanged separate but coordinated development and pursuit of strategies	proprietary information and strategies developed and marketed together
Locus of Influence	Separate	shared or differentiated according to expertise and capacity	integrated, with acknowledgment of expertise and capacity
Written Agreements or Contracts	None	written agreements or contracts focusing on the specific roles of each organization in the implementation of a given project/activity	written agreements or contracts highlighting broad areas of mutual interest and commitment to work together.

The Context and Origins of the Partnership Continuum:
A Namibian Case Study

To better understand this contiuum and its potential application to other contexts, it is prudent to examine its contextual origins. In 1994, World Education began providing a range of capacity building services to enable Namibian NonGovernmental Organizations (NGOs) to better address the needs of a population historically disadvantaged by colonialism, apartheid structures, and years of struggle for independence. Under the USAID funded READ Project, World Education's operational approach emphasized participatory, nonformal adult education and training seems well suited to Namibia's current transition and challenges. By helping to develop skills and systems through training, study tours, and technical assistance and providing financial support to implement programs through grants, World Education was able to help NGOs grow. Central to determining the correct mix of services is the development of partnerships with the NGOs. Wherever possible, World Education has supported networking and the exchange of southern expertise building on its connections and Partnerships with other organizations in the region and on the continent.

With over 23 years of active armed struggle, decades of resistance against, or forced submission to, oppressive and racist structures imposed by colonial or minority powers, a natural and deep seated suspicion and resentment of outside intervention exists within the intended target population. Since independence, many NGOs have struggled to move from resistance strategies to development strategies while balancing their integrity, ethics, and historical roots. For many, the association with nations, organizations, and money that had not previously supported their struggle was not appropriate. As such, World Education entered into a challenging situation where it needed to prove itself as open, flexible, understanding, supportive, and trustworthy before it could expect to be accepted into the NGO community. This was a major hurdle to be overcome the first year.

The project was launched in 1993 to support all interests represented in the NGO community. The first year was devoted to developing relationships with the NGO community, understanding their particular needs, and providing initial support in the form of small grants and short-term training workshops. In year two, these relationships expanded and a new stream of activities specifically tailored to HIV/AIDS concerns were added along with longer-term training series and grant relationships.

In year three, World Education decided to focus 80% of its support and capacity-building efforts on a select group of partner NGOs. To formalize these relationships, World Education created a process that involved Joint Institutional Assessments (JIA) of the NGO and the development of partnership agreements that outline organizational objectives and an appropriate mix of support for a period of time. Over the course of the year, READ began to look towards strategies for institutionalizing services within the NGO community. In the process, fuller and more reciprocal Partnerships have emerged.

While suffering from donor cut-backs, year four and five have maintained this strategic approach, enabling the partners to explore joint ventures and activities. The focus on institutionalizing services and identifying exit strategies for the project will enable Namibian organizations to carry on beyond READ.

A Partnership Process In Action

The following steps reflect the structure of the process used to engage and support the development of partnerships

Step 1: Initial Meeting with NGO Leadership to Introduce the Process
Step 2: Discussions with NGO Board/Representative
Step 3: Partner Orientation Meeting (discussion of partnership guides and process)
Step 4: Preparation for partnership Design Meeting (NGO conducts comprehensive organizational assessment, World Education reviews or gathers information on NGO)
Step 5: Partnership Design Meeting (JIA and draft partnership agreement)
Step 6: Office and Field Visits
Step 7: Finalize and Sign the Written partnership Agreement
Step 8: Partnership Review (at 6-12 month intervals)

Options for Support

The READ project offered three types of support to Namibian NGOs: grants, training, and technical assistance. As the strategy of partnership emerged, the emphasis shifted to a balanced mix of these support services tailored to meet the specific needs of our partner NGOs (Mullinix, 1998).

Grants. A primary purpose of the READ project is to act as a responsible and supportive conduit of funds to Namibian NGOs through subgrants. To access subgrants, NGOs present proposals that demonstrate institutional vision, capacity, and planning as well as a balanced board and clientele, representative of READ's ultimate target beneficiaries. As World Education's partnerships began to mature, grants became tied to the process of joint institutional assessment and the development of partnership agreements.

Training. READ training begins with an analysis of staff training needs based on NGO missions, objectives, and work. Common needs and problems are responded to through the design and implementation of tailor-made, in-country training courses such as programs addressing literacy, basic accounting, organizational development, community-based HIV/AIDS education and capacity building. Unique needs are addressed by supporting longer-term in-country training, degree courses, or study tours. Also, in response to an obvious and felt need for training skills in participatory and nonformal adult education, a Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop Series was developed to enhance the skills of participating trainers in the design, analysis, implementation, and documentation of quality training (Mullinix, Aipinge, et al, 1998). A second long-term ToT Series was developed to specifically support the implementation of a Community-Based HIV/AIDS Program. In addition, a strategy was developed to create a cadre of Master Trainers

who could support the replication of these training courses and development of new courses in Namibia. After one year of mentored support in the design and implementation of Training Series, ten Master Trainers have been certified in Namibia.

Technical Assistance and South-South Interactions. There are times when an NGO needs specialized assistance in developing a particular capacity or undertaking a particular process. Such needs might range from improving the financial management system of the organization to developing a project plan and proposal to undertaking a strategic planning process. On the READ staff are individuals with skills and ability to offer technical support in many of these areas. Where it was necessary to find specialized expertise elsewhere, World Education generally tapped expertise from related southern institutions, demonstrating its trademark commitment to south-south exchange. On several occasions READ drew upon the expertise of the Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme (K-REP), a leader in credit and micro-enterprise development and a World Education Partner. K-REP staff provided training and technical assistance to Namibian NGOs and served as quality role models for the sector (Mullinix & Long, 1997).

Partnership in Evolution: The Case of the Private Sector Foundation

The Private Sector Foundation (PSF) was founded in 1980 to help address problems faced by marginalized and disadvantaged populations in Namibia. PSF mobilizes public and private sector resources to assist with issues of small business development, human resource development, labor relations, and housing. Since independence PSF has expanded and targeted the majority of its services to small entrepreneurs, especially women, actively redressing the historical disadvantages that impeded individual and sectoral development.

PSF was part of the first group of NGOs to work with READ. It was also one of the first to go through READ's partnership process and one of the few to continue along the continuum into Partnership activities. At the outset, PSF and READ participated in joint exercises to become familiar with each other's staff, Board of Directors, and work methodologies. They participated in site visits and thorough discussions of organizational desires and needs. This initial phase allowed the two organizations to build a relationship of mutual trust that enabled a natural transition to a more egalitarian partnership.

Once familiar with each other's goals and objectives, PSF conducted a Joint Institutional Assessment (JIA) to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to serve as the base for the development of a plan for future support. The result was a profile of the NGO's organizational capacity; the prioritization of support needs; and a set of objectives and indicators for partnership activities and evaluation. This information formed the basis of a written partnership agreement, signed by both parties. PSF's main objectives included: addressing organizational sustainability, expanding and supporting staff development, fundraising, and gaining expertise in conducting the READ originated Training of Trainers Workshop Series.

Grant Support. Small grants to PSF supported programs and the redesign and expansion of credit and training services. The grant funds provided PSF with a secure base upon which they could continue their established activities and introduce innovative program and management structures applying the skills, information, and practices they gained through training and technical assistance activities.

Improving Training Skills. PSF participated in nearly every training opportunity offered by READ and quickly gained knowledge and expertise. Two of their trainers were chosen to redesign and co-facilitate READ's 1996 ToT Series and to begin a year of mentored training as Master Trainers. Others, contributed to the development of training manuals on marketing, business operations, and credit. In collaboration with the Rössing Foundation, PSF has now taken over complete responsibility for the implementation of READ's Training of Trainers Workshop Series (Mullinix, 1999).

Technical Assistance and South-South Training. PSF benefited from technical assistance and training from READ and the Kenya Rural Enterprise Program (K-REP). K-REP assisted and facilitated the analysis of their existing programs and in the strategic design and implementation of a new credit structure. The READ Training Officer provided technical assistance and on-the-job training in support of the financial and logistical management of the ToT Series, including spreadsheet design, budgeting techniques, financial reporting, and development of their monitoring and evaluation system.

Changes in Management. When READ first began working with the Private Sector Foundation, it was a relatively small NGO with a flat management structure: two directors, five trainers and three support staff operating in three regions. While its trainers and clientele were diverse in origin and experience, the governing board was only slightly less diverse than the management and represented primarily private sector companies with few ties to PSF's clients - disadvantaged populations in Namibia.

Since this time, PSF has changed significantly. PSF added an Advisory Board to its management structure that is representative of its client interests. A training unit was created to more effectively use the skills of the Master Trainers within, and outside of, PSF. PSF now operates four branch offices throughout the country with plans for two more in the near future. Their trainers and field staff now number nearly 30 and they actively respond to the increasing demands from entrepreneurs as their reputation and impact precede them.

Moving from partnership to Partnership. While it is neither appropriate nor desirable for all READ partners to transition into Partnership with World Education, in PSF's case this was mutually acknowledged as the correct path. After three years of working together, it is clear that PSF and World Education are well beyond the relationship building stage and have developed a longer-term mutual relationship that qualifies as Partnership. World Education now regularly accesses PSF's expertise in participatory, nonformal education and training as it continues to support the development of training capacity in Namibia. Together with the Rossing Foundation, PSF has taken over responsibility for implementation of the trademark 10-month Training of Trainers (ToT) series they helped to develop with World Education.

In addition, PSF staff have played an active role in the establishment and expansion of the Namibian Trainer's Network (NaTNet). A PSF Master Trainer who co-facilitates the ToT Workshop Series sits on the NaTNet Executive Committee. With over 60 members and a growing national reputation, NaTNet has already been approached by several projects and international organizations for training and curriculum development services. As active network

members and a central repository of the most skilled Master Trainers, PSF is contributing substantially to the Network's expansion, reputation, and development.

While unique, PSF is also representative of the NGOs and the impact that READ has had on them. As one of the longest-term partnerships and one of the most committed to relationship building, it benefited from many inputs over time. As a result, institutional growth is pronounced. The impact of the training inputs has permeated individual staff, organizational structures, and client levels of the organization. The relationship built between READ and PSF in the early years has slowly shifted along the continuum to a new stage of Partnership that provides important benefits to both parties.

Post-Script and Reality Check

Even in the best of circumstances, organizations do not survive. Thus was the fate of the Private Sector Foundation. In 1999, shortly after the READ project concluded and after nearly 20 years of expanding operation, the Private Sector Foundation closed its doors. While the partnership activities had helped the organization to grow and develop, it could not address certain transitional leadership issues that PSF needed to deal with. This is not to say that the partnership was a failure. Indeed, through the farsighted strategies and networking employed by the READ project, World Education helped to ensure that the people and activities central to the partnership continued. Selected staff and Master Trainers from PSF who had been associated with the ToT Series continued to work with The Rössing Foundation on its implementation. Recent reports from the field confirm that this daughter of the partnership process (the ToT Series) is continuing to contribute to development in Namibian, operating from a fully Namibian base (Garb, 2000; Kalunduka, 1999). Networked connections among NGOs facilitated and nurtured by the READ project helped to ensure that talented personnel from PSF continued to be employed by organizations who recognized and valued their skills and engaged them in promoting national and grassroots development efforts.

Reflections on Project Responsiveness and the Concept of Partnership

As the READ project wound down, World Education continued to reflect on project experience on building capacity and relationships with local organizations through partnership. While many insights emerged, two were identified as particularly critical to project success: project responsiveness and a critical and deep understanding of the possible forms of partnership.

Project Approach and Responsiveness. NGOs in Namibia -- as in many parts of the world -- are mission-driven but resource poor. They have limited financial resources, they have small staffs, and they desire to meet urgent and pressing needs. Setting aside time to systematically take stock of their organizations and to comprehensively identify organizational needs can be seen at times as burdensome or undoable. Further, the process of critically examining one's own organization and sharing the information with another organization can be a threatening prospect.

To respond to these realities and concerns, READ offered a variety of options for entry activities that would begin to build trust, understanding and respect between the organizations and their respective staff. With important groundwork laid through such initial activities, the Joint Institutional Assessment was generally an appropriate next step. However, READ did not make the completion of a JIA a prerequisite for assisting NGOs. Nor did it require all NGOs to go through all steps in the partnership process sequentially. By encouraging responsiveness to NGO contexts and needs and the flexible application of the partnership process, READ was able to initiate relationships that led to increased sharing of information and goals, a formal joint institutional assessment, the identification of appropriate types and levels of support and involvement, and the construction of appropriate and responsive partnership agreements.

Forms and Advantages of Partnership. Through partnership between Namibian Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and an American Private Voluntary Organization (PVO), both organizations found that they could *do more* than they would have on their own. It is our hope that the Partnerships we have established will continue to help us to *become more*, expanding our collective horizons and impacting positively on development. Central to the concept of partnership at all levels is empowerment. For World Education/Namibia, the partnerships embarked on are only truly meaningful when they result in the empowerment of communities and individuals. We are lucky to have had enough time to build and expand upon our relationships to not only see them grow through different stages of partnership, but to allow us to hear the stories and see the effects on the people and communities who, as partners in development, we are all dedicated to reach.

Tapestries in Progress

As the wealth and depth of our experiences with partnership increase, so do the variety of partnerships exhibited. Like examples of richly woven tapestries, they represent a collection of unique and complex images. As with tapestries, careful examination of colors, materials, textures and techniques provide clues that help us to categorize them according to influences, complexity, maturity, etc. As with tapestries, we learn from these analyses how to construct better, more intricate and elegant products. As with tapestries, critical reflection is no substitute for experiece. The master weaver may be inspired by patterns and spurred on through apprenticeship, but it is experience and deep practical knowledge of the materials and methods of the craft that produce exemplary products. So to is the process of nurturing partnership. Deep grounded understanding of the organizations (materials) coupled with flexible and appropriate strategies (creativity and methods) and respect for the influences (color, texture, cultural base...) all inform the establishment of strong and successful partnerships. While partnerships may represent the perennial "work in progress", the more experience we have in working with them, the better chance we have of appreciating the nuances of their complexity and understanding how to effectively nurture them.

Bonnie B. Mullinix is currently Millicent Fenwick Research Professor in Education and Public Issues at Monmouth University. Prior to this she had worked in international development and education for over 20 years and was resident in Africa for 9 of these. She had worked full time with World Education for over six years and served as Training Officer for the READ Project in Namibia from 1995-1998. She holds a Masters and Doctorate in Adult and Nonformal Education from the Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

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